

Road Improvement District (R.I.D.)

Bulletin
#100



Q: What is a Road Improvement District?

A: A Road Improvement District (R.I.D.) is a mutual agreement between Snohomish County and property owners in a given geographic area. It allows the property owners to cooperate with one another to finance improvements to their local road or road system.

Q: Why would a neighborhood want to form an R.I.D.?

A: Forming an R.I.D. gives a neighborhood a way to pay for improvements in their immediate area. The County has limited funds for road improvements, so it must focus its maintenance efforts on roads that are most heavily used.

Q: What kinds of improvements can an R.I.D. make?

A: It can be used to build a new road or to upgrade an existing road—that is, to finance new paving, street lighting, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, etc. It cannot be used to maintain existing facilities. Where the existing road is privately owned, it must first be brought up to public standards and then deeded to the County before it can be considered for an R.I.D.

Q: Who decides if an R.I.D. can be created?

A: It must be approved by the Snohomish County Council. There is no formal action for the citizen to approve; he or she may only protest the formation of an R.I.D.

Q: Who pays for the R.I.D.?

A: Costs of improvements, including design and administration, are borne by those who will directly benefit—the local property owners. For each R.I.D., a “benefit area” is drawn up to show what properties will specifically benefit from the improvements and be responsible for payment. This benefit area usually includes those properties which front or are close to the affected road. When a neighborhood begins to consider whether to form an R.I.D., it is important for residents to consider whether the benefits will be worth the necessary expense.

Q: Who can start an R.I.D.?

A: Any local resident or community group may request that an R.I.D. be formed in their area. Occasionally the County Council may initiate an R.I.D., but requests usually begin with citizens.

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Q: What County department handles R.I.D.s?

A: The Public Works Department coordinates the R.I.D process. Its personnel act as advisors to both the community and the County Council. They notify all affected property owners, handle the necessary paperwork and cost estimates, and oversee design and construction of the project.

The Council determines what assessment method will be used, whether the project is feasible, and whether its benefits outweigh the costs. They have the power to approve, deny or make minor modifications to any R.I.D. proposal, including being able to adjust the district boundaries.

Q: How does the process begin?

A: First the County must receive a request from a citizen to create an R.I.D. A written request must be sent to the County Engineer, Snohomish County Public Works, 5th floor Admin-West Bldg., M/S 607, 3000 Rockefeller Ave., Everett, WA 98201.

After the request has been received, a Public Works staff member will meet with a community organizer (usually the party who submitted the request) or committee to discuss the process and the potential project. The staff member will prepare an advisory petition and send copies to the community organizers, who are responsible for collecting signatures from property owners within the benefit area. The affected property owners may sign the petition to demonstrate their support for the project, or decline to sign to oppose it.

Q: How many people need to sign the petition?

A: For a project to proceed, advisory petitions must be signed by property owners representing a simple majority (51 percent) of the benefit area and frontage. Petitions with adequate representation then are submitted, along with a \$500 application fee, to the County Council.

At this stage, local residents are encouraged to hold one or more community meetings to inform all their neighbors about what is taking place and explain the process. If invited, a Public Works staff member will attend to provide information and assistance.

Q: Are any public hearings held?

A: Yes. The Council must hold two public hearings to allow local residents the opportunity to comment.

At the first hearing, which is held to form the RID, affected residents are invited to speak and inform the Council of any objections they have to the proposal. The Council will determine at that time whether the project has adequate support; if the answer is yes, they will give preliminary approval of the R.I.D. boundaries and assessment method. Public Works will prepare a cost estimate and a preliminary assessment roll (who will need to pay what).

The second hearing is held following construction to consider the final assessment roll. Any comments at that time must be submitted in writing.

Q: How will we know what the project will cost us?

A: The cost to an individual property usually depends on the amount of acreage and/or road frontage. Sometimes it is based on special benefit. These preliminary assessments are mailed to all affected property owners prior to the Council hearing on the establishment of the R.I.D.

Q: How is the final cost determined?

A: After construction is completed, Public Works will determine the total costs (including administration and design) and prepare a final assessment roll using the methodology identified when the RID formed.

Q: How are payments collected?

A: R.I.D. assessments are liens against property. The assessment can be paid immediately to the County to avoid interest charges, or in installments over a period of up to 20 years. This is set by the County Council.

Q: How long does the whole R.I.D. process take?

A: Generally, the time between submittal of a signed advisory petition and the start of construction, including right-of-way acquisition, is approximately one to two years. Construction time depends on the individual project.

Q: How do I get more information?

A: Call 425-388-3488, or toll free 1-800-562-4367. Ask for the County Engineer.

*This bulletin is intended only as an information guide.
The information may not be complete and is subject to change.
For complete legal information, refer to the Snohomish County Code.*